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Feature: Dialogue with Political Theorists

Republicanism, philosophy of freedom and the history of ideas: Interview with Philip Pettit

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Maria Dimova-Cookson (MDC): Professor Pettit, thank you very much for agreeing to an interview for *Contemporary Political Theory*. There are many things I would like to ask you, but I would start with a question on your republican theory of liberty. This is not only due to the fact that this is where my research interests lie, but because this theory has exerted tremendous influence on contemporary political theory. It has made you a leading figure in contemporary liberal scholarship of freedom where your influence, and indeed popularity, compares to that of Isaiah Berlin. My first question is about how you got to republican liberty. Your paper 'Freedom as Antipower' appeared in Ethics in 1996 and then your book *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* came out in 1997. However, as far as I can see, the theme of republicanism does not feature prominently in your previous work.

Philip Pettit (PP): I won't comment on the excessive generosity of your remarks but I will say a few things on this question. I think that three quite different impulses primed my thinking about the topic. I hope it won't be tiresome if I go through them in turn.

The first is that I had worked through the 1980's on a book, *The Common Mind*, which appeared in 1993, and as part of that project I had begun to think about a range of political values, freedom included. The book argued for a social ontology built around two theses. First, a pro-individualist thesis, to the effect that there are no good grounds for thinking that social relations or forces undermine the ordinary workings of our psychology, as in certain Durkheimian or Marxist approaches. Second, an anti-atomistic thesis, to the effect that nonetheless there are good grounds for holding that human beings need social relationships — and need them for more than contingent, causal reasons — in order to develop crucial capacities, in particular the capacity to reflect and reason and deliberate. While much of the book was given to the argument for this individualistic holism, as I called it, the last third was an attempt to display its implications for social methodology and political philosophy.

I argued that, given the anti-atomistic turn, we should expect the main role in political theory to be played by essentially social values — values that presuppose social life, unlike a value like utility or freedom as non-interference — and I asked whether there were any essentially social values available for such that role. In that context I began to realize that freedom itself might be reinterpreted as an essentially social value. Your freedom might be cast as the status you enjoy when, living amongst others, you are more

or less insured against their interfering, or at least their interfering with impunity, in your life. I found the ideal of such status-freedom inherently attractive and this may have been the first consideration that made an impact on my thinking.

But a second and third factor quickly reinforced my enthusiasm. The second was that as I described the notion of status-freedom to a colleague in legal history, David Neale, he mentioned that it was reminiscent of material in some recent papers by Quentin Skinner on how freedom was conceived in the long tradition of Italian-Atlantic republicanism that John Pocock had described. I knew Quentin personally and was familiar with much of his work but those articles were new to me and reading them was a revelation. Given his particular interpretation, I found in the various theorists he discussed an image of the sort of status-freedom I had begun to think about. And more than that, of course, I was deeply influenced by those figures, and by Quentin's interpretation, in further developing that conception of status-freedom.

The third factor that had a major impact on me at the time was collaborating with John Braithwaite at the ANU on a book on criminal justice, *Not Just Deserts (1990).* Our aim in the project that led to that book was to explore and interrogate the new retributivism that had come to dominate in law and criminology. As we worked through our ideas, we decided that the best way of articulating them was by reliance on the republican conception of status freedom — in that book we called it freedom as dominion — and indeed we described the book in a subtitle as 'A Republican Theory of Criminal Justice'. That exercise made me more and more aware of the how profitable it was to think about policy issues in terms of this idea of freedom and it boosted my commitment to the research program, as I later described it, of seeing how political philosophy might be pursued on a republican basis.

I don't think I'm fantasizing in saying that these three sources of influence, philosophical, historical, and practical, have continued to have an impact on my own adherence to the republican research program. Over the past decade or so my belief in the program has been reinforced by my own work, but above all by the work of others, on all three fronts.

I have gained a deeper understanding of the philosophical framework through collaborative work with a number of people, in particular Christian List of the LSE — our book *Group Agency* appears in 2011 — and through exchanges with opponents like Ian Carter and Matt Kramer: see the 2008 collection by Cecile Laborde and John Maynor on *Republicanism and Political Theory*. I have been encouraged about the historical claims in which neo-republicanism began by the continuing work of Quentin Skinner and a range of other writers, including my own students, and by my own work on Hobbes and modern political thought more generally. And I have been excited by the continuing development of republican ideas for policy-making and constitutional design that many scholars have helped advance. See, for example, the 2009 collection on *Legal Republicanism* by Samantha Besson and Jose Marti, the 2010 collection on republican democracy —*Building a Citizen Society* — edited by Daniel Leighton and Stuart White, and the 2010 issue of *European Journal of Political Theory* on republicanism and international relations. The use made of republican ideas in the 2004-08 Zapatero

government was also encouraging, as those ideas sponsored a range of important reforms: see the 2010 book with Jose Marti on *A Political Philosophy in Public Life: Civic Republicanism in Zapatero's Spain.* The recent work that gives me faith in the promise of the research program is often done, of course, by others. Just in the last two years, I have been very impressed by Cecile Laborde's 2009 book on the Hijab controversy, entitled *Critical Republicanism,* and Frank Lovett's 2010 book, *A General Theory of Domination and Justice.*

(MDC): You have another book on freedom, *A Theory of Freedom: From the Psychology to the Politics of Agency* (2001), which offers a more philosophical as opposed to a 'political theory' analysis of freedom. The definition of freedom as discursive control in this book is distinct from the republican theory of freedom as non domination. Would political theorists understand republican freedom better, if they have an enriched knowledge of freedom as discursive control? More generally, this is a question about the link between the philosophy and the political theory of freedom. Would political theorists be well advised to focus exclusively on your Republicanism?

(PP): The 2001 book begins from the equation between being free in the choice between two actions, x and y, and counting as fit, within our ordinary practices, to be held responsible for choosing between them. I was interested in the fact that this equation promises to give a unified perspective on freedom in psychological and social domains and that it imposes an interesting constraint on what we should think that such unified or comprehensive freedom requires. I argued that what full, comprehensive freedom requires can be cast as discursive control, where this control has two aspects. On the psychological side, it means that the agent is fully sensitive to the values he or she endorses, and informed and rational enough to let those values impact on choice. On the social side, it means that the agent enjoys relationships to others in which, ideally, their influence goes via reasons offered on a take-it-or-leave-it basis or, to allow for the effects of charm and humor and congeniality, does not in any way restrict such reason-mediated influence.

If this is the way to think about freedom in a comprehensive sense, how in particular should we think about political freedom: that is, freedom insofar as it is a proper concern of the state? The book argues that the state should concern itself in one way with more than discursive control and in another way with less. The state should be concerned with more to the extent that it focuses, not just on whether people are free in choices within the opportunities for choice that they are given, but also with how far they enjoy adequate opportunities for choice. And the state should be concerned with less than discursive control to the extent that it has little business in trying to ensure the psychological freedom of its citizens — their positive freedom in a psychological interpretation; it should concentrate on their social freedom alone.

What does this focus mean in practice? Here I returned to republican themes, arguing that the state will not adequately cater for the needs of discursive control unless it adopts the republican ideal of political freedom: that is, freedom as non-domination. The last chapters of the book restate some of the basic themes of the 1997 book, *Republicanism.*

You ask whether political theorists would be well advised to focus on the 1997 book and to neglect this later book. I'm not the best person to answer that question. But as between these two books, I think the predominantly political book from 1997 is the more successful in its own terms. The 2001 book is more ambitious as well as more philosophical and, while I find that people of Kantian or Hegelian affiliations are often supportive, I feel that it often tries to cover too much material in too short a space.

(MDC): You and Quentin Skinner are the founding fathers of the late twentieth century revival of republicanism. Would you tell us more about your academic relationship with Skinner? You have explained very well where exactly your theoretical disagreements reside: while Skinner believes that republican freedom combines non-domination and non-interference, you insist that republican freedom is only about non-domination and that it can co-habit well with non-arbitrary interference. Are there other differences between you and Skinner? Quentin Skinner has acknowledged your positive impact on his ideas: has he had a positive impact on the development of your ideas?

(PP): I could hardly overstate the influence of Quentin Skinner on my own thinking. On the interpretation of the republican tradition in the articles I mentioned, he stressed the fact that contrary to Pocock, the idea of freedom maintained there was not any version of positive freedom: not the psychological version of positive freedom, in which it requires something like autonomy; and not the political version, in which it means participation in a self-determining community. It was this move that transformed our possibilities of looking again at that tradition and it is hard now to remember what a radical move it was; it represented a break with those like Constant and Berlin, who rejected positive freedom as a main ideal for the state, but also with the many nineteenth and twentieth thinkers who embraced that ideal.

While Quentin represented republican freedom in those earlier papers as a variant on the notion of freedom as non-interference, it seemed to me that his sources and his own comments lent themselves to an alternative construal in which freedom requires the absence of domination, not interference. I felt that I was merely articulating what was already implicit in his work and I was delighted that in his 1998 book, *Liberty before Liberalism*, he adopted this way of putting things himself.

You mention that in that book he suggests that interference as well as domination is inimical to republican freedom, while I had argued that domination alone fills that slot. Perhaps I can comment further on this, using an equation that Quentin himself also frequently employs. The equation identifies domination with subjection to the will of another. It is of particular interest because it makes it absolutely clear that interference as such need not be inimical to freedom.

To be subject to the will of another in a choice or set of choices is to be dependent on that will for being able to choose as you wish. The most dramatic form of dependency occurs when another person actually interferes with you, actively imposing an alien will on you. They may remove one of your options, replace it by a penalized alternative, or deceive or

manipulate you so that you cannot reason properly about what to choose. The nice thing about equating domination with subjection to the will of another, however, is that it makes it absolutely obvious how you may be dominated without suffering such active interference and, on the other side, how you may be actively interfered with without suffering domination.

Domination may occur without interference, because you may be subjected to the will of another just in virtue of being exposed to that person's power of interference. Suppose that I have the power of interfering with you in a series of choices but am good-willed enough to let you choose as you wish. You are still subject to my will in those choices — how far subject will depend on the extent of my power — since you depend for being able to choose as you wish on my remaining good-willed; you choose as you wish only because, in effect, I allow you to do so. I do not interfere with you but I invigilate your choice and thereby subject you to my will. Apart from dominating you by invigilation I may also dominate you by intimidation. If you believe rightly or wrongly that I am invigilating you, so that I am ready to interfere should I take against you, then you are likely to second-guess my wishes or try to keep me sweet, letting my will rule in your choices without my having to do anything to impose it.

But not only may domination occur without interference — that is, by invigilation and intimidation — so may interference occur without domination. Again, the equation with subjection to the will of another makes this clear. Suppose that you feel that you drink too much in the evenings, and that in order to cope with your weakness you have given me the key to the booze cupboard, with instructions that I let you have it at your request only on 24 hours' notice. In refusing to give you the key on a particular evening, I will certainly be interfering with you. But in doing so I will not be imposing an alien will, just your own more reflective will. Hence that sort of interference — interference on your own terms, interference that is in that sense 'non-arbitrary' — does not constitute domination because it does not subject you to the will of another.

To be free, as Cato's Letters put it in the eighteenth century, is 'to live upon one's own terms'; to be dominated is 'to live at the mere mercy of another'. It should be absolutely clear that if I interfere with what you drink in the manner envisaged here, then I interfere on your terms, not on mine, and I do nothing to take from your freedom. You may be subject to that interference but still enjoy what Algernon Sidney had described in the previous century as 'independency upon the will of another'.

(MDC): What do you think about the distinction between political theory and political thought? Do you think it reflects an important ongoing tension between philosophical and historical approaches to the study of ideas? This question has some relevance to your republican theory, which, on the one hand turns to a specific tradition of the past, but on the other, engages with normative claims whose justification has little to do with the historical context of classical republicanism. What do you think about the interplay between historical and theoretical modes of republicanism?

(PP): The history of political thought is a distinct from political thought itself: from the

discipline, analytical or normative or institutional, of thinking about what the state is and how the state ought to behave, both in relation to its members and in relation to other states. But in the pursuit of that discipline in any period I believe that it is of great importance that practitioners remain in touch with the history of their subject. And, on the other side, I think it is equally important that those who do the history of political thought are active in thinking about issues of political theory in their own right.

The reason why historians need theory or philosophy — I don't make a distinction there — is methodological. It is next to impossible to work out what figures in the past were thinking if you have no experience yourself in that sort of exercise, as it is impossible to work out what they were thinking if you are unaware of the context and pressures under which they were working. The only extensive historical work that I have done myself is in my 2008 study of Hobbes, *Made with Words*. I don't think I could have begun to make good sense of many of the things Hobbes maintained — I hope I did make good sense — without being familiar with working through the sorts of issues that he was confronting too.

The reason why political theorists or philosophers need history, however, is substantive rather than methodological. In developing any wide-ranging political perspective, it is necessary to cover a great range of topics. It is almost inconceivable that someone could develop a seriously interesting viewpoint without exposure to what the greatest minds in the past have thought about such topics. To deny yourself a knowledge of the history of political thought, while trying to do political theory or philosophy, would be a willful refusal of potential insight. One lesson of the contextualism that people like Quentin Skinner and John Dunn sponsored is that political philosophy is not like science. There can be nothing resembling a gradual accumulation of accepted results, if political thought is conducted now in one distinctive context, now in another. For contextualist reasons, then, any contemporary political theorist ought to take an active interest in the history of the subject, since historical work is required if you are to acquaint yourself with the best that has gone before. You cannot rely on the best being preserved in received wisdom, as the best in science may be preserved — Kuhn notwithstanding — in the assumptions of contemporary practice.

Elaborating on this thought, I don't think I could have had any confidence in the value or viability of the ideal of freedom as non-domination without the discovery of its importance over very different contexts in the history of political thought and practice. And I don't think I could have appreciated the contrast with freedom as non-interference without an understanding of the role that this alternative played in the work of intellectual iconoclasts like Hobbes, or utilitarian reformers like Bentham.

Just to focus on one crucial aspect of the older ideal, it gave an indispensable impetus to my own thinking to realize that whereas freedom as non-interference has always been cast as an ideal for the isolated choice, freedom as non-domination was primarily understood as an ideal for a person or citizen. In our established ways of thinking it is choices that are free in the first place and persons in the second: persons are free just to the extent that their choices are free. In the older way of thinking, things were the other

way around. The recognition that this is so forced me, I think profitably, to reflect on what it could mean for a citizen to be free.

Thinking about that issue, I was led to the view that we should represent the free citizen as someone who is protected against domination on a common basis with others in the society — specifically, on a basis of shared laws and norms — and in the same range of choices: certainly in the range of the basic liberties, however they are best interpreted in the local culture. That, in essence, is how traditional republicans thought about the figure they described in the masculinist, elitist terms of their time as the free-man: the liber of Latin law who lives sui juris: that is, on his own terms.

But, to move on a little, you also ask about how far it is useful to take ideas from past contexts and apply them in the contemporary world. I can best respond by continuing to focus on this idea of civic freedom: the freedom of the citizen. In all pre-modern contexts, the citizen was male, propertied and mainstream and the main amendment that must be made by anyone who wants to invoke this ideal of civic freedom — civic freedom as non-domination — is to extend the category of citizenship or membership so that it is suitably inclusive; what suitably inclusive is, I put aside for now. Is that sort of amendment wholly inappropriate? I absolutely fail to see why it should be. If there is an institutional possibility of achieving or approximating equal civic freedom in this sense, then it would be sheer dogmatism to declare that this is something we should shrink from: that the ideal of civic freedom is the property of distinctive past contexts and cannot be extended beyond their bounds.

Why should the ideal of equal civic freedom as non-domination appeal in the contemporary world? First, the ideal is rooted in accepted ideas, and articulated on the basis of an attractive and precedented understanding of those ideas, so that it has some chance of being endorsed on a wide front. Second, the ideal is a properly political or public good that cannot be adequately provided for within the market or civic society, though it imposes constraints on both; it requires a system of protection that only the state can provide. Third, it requires the state to go well beyond the minimal protection of the night-watchman regime, arguing for a system of empowerment with many elements: a rule of impartial law and norm; a well-regulated and sustainable economy; a regime of universal education, information and access to law; social insurance against illness, homelessness, unemployment and the like; safeguards and alternatives that guard against domination in special relationships, say within the home or work-place; and restrictions on the operation of corporate bodies, such as companies and churches, that can guard against their dominating individual human beings. Fourth, it does not force us to embrace more or less utopian demands for equalizing resources, even though it is bound to require a considerable amount of redistribution. And fifth, it provides a base for thinking in a fresh way about old or even new problems: it is, in that sense, a generative research program. In illustration of that last theme I might mention that it provides a novel way of rethinking democracy — I comment on this in response to a later question— and of re-conceptualizing international relations in light of the ideal of non-domination amongst peoples: on that matter see the papers in the recent issue of the *European Journal of*

Political Theory, mentioned above, or indeed the books by people like Steven Slaughter and Jim Bohman.

(MDC): Your scholarship ranges widely over different areas of moral philosophy, political philosophy, philosophy of social sciences, philosophy of mind and action, and metaphysics. Which areas of your research do you see as most significant and why? Who are your philosophical heroes from the past and the present?

(PP): I come of a rather eclectic background. I did my early research work in Ireland on figures like Husserl, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur and then developed more analytical interests in a period as Research Fellow at Trinity Hall in Cambridge. One of Derrida's arguments (in an early book, *La Voix et le Phenomene*) convinced me that the continental tradition had been insensitive to the role of language in shaping our mind and thought and that, ironically, led me into a study of more analytical figures like Wittgenstein, Ryle and Austin. My defense of an individualistic holism in *The Common Mind* tries to develop Wittgenstein's considerations on rule-following and he, of course, must count as one of my great heroes. But I didn't ever go along with his antipathy to theory and his view that philosophy could only offer therapy. Here I have always been attracted to the ideal of painting on a large canvas, developing a framework of ideas that might regiment and reshape the picture of things that is encoded in our ordinary practices, and in our unexamined idioms of speech and thought. I confess to retaining some of the excitement I experienced as a late teenager when I read through Sartre's literary and philosophical work and marveled at its novelty and scope. It may not have been wholly persuasive — certainly it was not very precisely drawn — but my goodness, it was impressive.

I like to think that philosophy should aim at the sharp focus it often achieves in analytical work without reneging on the ambition of providing the panoramic vision that continental theory — postmodernism aside — seeks to provide. While I think that his work sometimes loses sharpness of focus, one of my heroes is certainly Juergen Habermas. He stands well above most contemporary thinkers in arguing for a framework of thought that encompasses the philosophy of language and mind at one end and the philosophy of law and politics at the other.

So apart from Wittgenstein and Habermas, who are my philosophical heroes? The strange thing here is that the republican ideas that I often identify with in past writings are present in the works of people like Polybius, Cicero, Machiavelli, Harrington, Sidney, Montesquieu, and the American founders who are not great philosophers by any metric. I use their work for the insights that I find in them on specific themes like the nature of freedom, the viability of the mixed constitution, the role of the citizenry in public life, or the possibility of relying in institutional design on what Geoff Brennan and I described in the title of our 2004 book as *The Economy of Esteem*.

Those in the past that I regard as great thinkers and that I read with the greatest pleasure are often figures with whom I do not agree on vast ranges of issues. They include Kant and Hume, for sure. And they include Rousseau, though I recoil from the way he replaced

Italian-Atlantic republicanism with a Franco-German variant. In this transformed republicanism, freedom remains non-domination — at least it does so in Rousseau and Kant — but the traditional institutional ideal of the mixed constitution, combined with a contestatory, law-checking citizenry, is transformed into the romantic, highly questionable ideal of an assembled people with a participatory, law-making role. I think that the Franco-German development that he prompted eclipsed the more traditional form of republicanism and created the illusion that there were only two shows in town: the romantic Rousseauvian show and the more realistic, modernist performance associated with utilitarians and classical liberals.

But before going to your next question, I must say that one of my great intellectual heroes is Hobbes, whose views on political and related matters I utterly abhor. In the book on *Made with Words* I try to show that uniquely amongst early modern philosophers, he developed an image of human capacities that underwrote a comprehensive, naturalistic vision of the natural and psychological, the social and the political, realms. His guiding idea is that human beings become special amongst other animals, not by virtue of a higher level of natural capacity — to put it in modern jargon, the 3% of genetically marked difference — but by virtue of our having been lucky enough to invent language. It is language that accounts for our ability to think in general terms — to escape from the prison-house of the here and now — and, more specifically, to reason our way between propositions, to give our words in contract to one another, and to rally behind a single voice in incorporating with others as a group agent. It is also language, alas, which leads us into the war of all against wall, as it facilitates the formation of desires that extend into the far future and that encourage us to settle for nothing less than being first or to the fore in comparison with others. But, and this is where Hobbes's political theory figures, the resources with which language provides us make it possible to rescue ourselves from the very predicament to which it gives rise. We can incorporate as a commonwealth, if only we are willing to recognize the single voice of the sovereign as an unchallengeable authority. The conclusion may not be fetching and it may be reached by some deft but dubious footwork. But the sweep of the vision is magnificent. It thrills me intellectually, though not morally and not politically.

(MDC): I can see that you have a forthcoming book with CUP entitled On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory of Democracy. How does this differ from a republican theory of freedom? What other theories of democracy does the book challenge?

(PP): There are three domains in the theory of justice: domestic justice, global justice and democratic justice. I gave some indication earlier of where I think that republican theory points in matters of domestic and global justice. But where does it lead in democratic justice? That is the issue in this book, which is based on the Seeley lectures that I presented in Cambridge in April 2010.

The question in democratic justice, at least in a national context, is this. What is the relationship between people and government that justice requires? A government might deliver domestic justice, having policies that promote equal civic freedom as non-domination amongst people, and yet be democratically unjust; it might even be a

benevolent despotism. So what is required for democratic justice? Republican theory gives a clear answer. The relationship between the state and its people should be, so far as possible, a relationship in which the governors do not dominate the governed. Government will always interfere in the lives of people, of course, since it will have to levy taxes for its own operation, impose coercive laws and sanction offenders against those laws. But republican theory suggests that this interference need not be dominating, if it is controlled by the will of those interfered with. And so it holds out an ideal of democratic justice: that government should be controlled by its people in such a way that its laws can be reasonably seen by members of the society as impositions that they have authorized.

The idea is that members might be able to view the laws as you, in the earlier example, would view my refusal to give you the key to the drinks cupboard. The citizen who finds some law or ruling particularly onerous, even perhaps unjust, can reasonably think that it's just tough luck that the law or ruling assumes that form; it does not come of the fact that the system is discriminatingly insensitive to his or her own claims or principles. Equally, and again ideally, those who break the law and suffer the imposition of sanctions can think that that is what they always knew was coming to them in the event of offending, and that the law itself does not represent the imposition of a wholly alien will.

I have always thought that the biggest challenge for republican theory is to be able to articulate a picture of democratic institutions in which this ideal might be achieved or approximated. In my book I begin from a number of points that are crucial to meeting that challenge. First, that just having to live under a state, no matter how wonderful that state is, does not mean that you are dominated; it is due to the bad luck of living in a state-bound world, not the result of anyone imposing an alien will on you. Second, that having to live under laws that do not treat you as special, giving you a veto or giving you a set of privileges, does not mean that you are dominated either; it is the product of normative necessity, as living under a state is the product of historical. And third that you will not be dominated by the state insofar as it is controlled by the people as a whole in a way that treats you as an equal, giving you an equal share and an equal stake in the control exercised.

With those points in place, we can begin to ask how we should think of the people who are to control government, what we should take control to require, and how we might organize things so that people really can expect to enjoy an equal share and an equal stake in that control. Those are the questions that I address in the book. The upshot, I believe, is a way of thinking about democracy — a design specification for a system that deserves to be described as a democracy — that is distinctively republican and institutionally novel. It is distinctively republican in arguing that the ideal of the democratic state is the ideal of a state that is not only committed to reducing private domination, as domestic justice requires, but is also organized so that in interfering in people’s lives it does not practice public domination; it operates on the people’s terms so that its interference does not subject them to an alien will. The ideal is institutionally novel in arguing that what is required for the democratic control of government goes well beyond the collective contestatory control that open, periodic elections may secure.

An electoral arrangement is certainly part of what is institutionally required but it is not sufficient on its own to promote the republican ideal. The full arrangements necessary, so I argue, must foster connected public discussion across many forums; identify the terms of argument about public policies that gain acceptance as relevant considerations on all sides of such discussion; help ensure that no policies that are inconsistent with those terms remain as options for government; and help ensure that the choice between rival policies that are equally consistent with those terms should be made on the basis of processes that are themselves supported by the terms. To say this, of course, is just to go to a lower level of description in characterizing a design specification for republican democracy, not yet to offer a description of the institutions that might do the job. But that is all, obviously, that I can offer here.

(MDC): As a Bulgarian, I cannot resist asking you whether you think the end of the cold war has had an impact on moral and political philosophy? Do we now discuss different topics? Do we ask different questions? When we met at an Isaiah Berlin workshop in Vancouver in 2008 you told me stories of visiting communist Bulgaria in the 70ies both as a tourist and as a delegate of the 15th World Congress of Philosophy. Your stories were about the 'mistreatment' you as western tourists received from the local officials. We live in a different world now: you will be treated very differently in Bulgaria, or any other Eastern European country, if you were to travel there now. Do you think the scholarship in moral and political philosophy has been impacted by these changes?

(PP): Let me finish with just a brief remark in response to this set of questions. The end of the cold war meant the end of the dichotomy between free-world and communist-world, democratic world and dictatorial world. Thus it focused attention sharply on rival democratic visions. In that focus, two pure rivals stood out. On the one side, a social democratic position that looked for a rich protective state and a regulated market; on the other, a minimal or libertarian democratic position that argued for a night-watchman state and a free, relatively unregulated market. In the intellectual, idealized conflict between these pure models I always felt that the libertarian did much better, although no state ever thought of embodying it in its full form. While it had a single ideal to invoke — in effect, freedom as non-interference — social democracy seemed to endorse a hodge-podge of desiderata, not any single vision. Even the relatively simplified, Rawlsian version of the social democratic ideal, combined the freedom ideal — a system of maximal, equal freedom as non-interference — and the rather rococo difference principle.

One of the reasons that republican theory appealed to me in the early 1990's, and one of the reasons it appeals to me still, is that it offers a simple and unified version of the social democratic ideal, arguing for a suitable range of protective and empowering policies on the basis of a plausible version of the single ideal of freedom. In that respect it does as well as libertarianism. But in another respect it does much better. For while libertarianism — or indeed social democracy — has never been clear about what in particular democracy requires, or what makes it attractive, the republican theory offers a reasonable vindication of democracy, as we saw, and a design specification for guiding its institutional realization. But I had better stop. I'm beginning to sound too much like an

advocate, too little like a political philosopher for whom republicanism remains a progressive and progressing research program, but not necessarily the holy grail.